

PROPOSAL FOR THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
FOR STUDY OF CAREER COMMITMENT

1. Proposal: That the Management Committee approve in principle and direct the DDA to carry out a long-range study of career commitment among Agency employees.

2. Background: A recent review of data on voluntary separations of Agency professionals revealed that the Agency is losing substantial numbers of good people at a point in their career when they are just beginning to realize their full potential. While there are no generally accepted yardsticks by which to judge just how much turnover among various categories of professionals is good or bad, a substantial loss of good people argues prima facie the need for a better understanding of the factors which induce people to stay or leave.

3. Rationale: The process by which career commitment evolves is assumed to be an on-going individual decision-making activity which can be best understood by tapping in at various points in an individual's career cycle. The variables which affect individual decisions are assumed to cover a wide range of attitudinal, economic, situational, background, and demographic factors, some of which may not enter consciously into an individual's rational decision process but nevertheless prove to be predictive of who will stay or leave. Hence a study of career commitment should focus on both process and variables. The ultimate value of such a study lies in its potential for providing guidance to management on Agency policies and practices in the areas of recruitment, training, personnel development, promotion, and job enrichment conducive to retention of the "best" people.

4. Scope and methodology: A two-phase study is proposed, with the two phases overlapping. Phase 1 would involve depth interviews with a sample of 50 to 100 professionals six to 18 months after separation to determine variables which influenced the decision to leave and the process by which the decision was made. This phase would

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provide a clearer picture of the reasons why people leave than is presently available, and yield information helpful to Phase 2.

Phase 2 would be a five-year longitudinal study of 100 to 150 professional employees, identified by their components as promising people, thus constituting a representative pool of employees from which management expects to fill senior positions in the next 5 to 10 years. The basic data for the study would come from annual structured depth interviews to track the career commitment process as it evolves, as well as such additional data on possibly relevant variables as may be available in official files (fitness reports, test data, personal history facts, etc.).

5. Resources: Interviewing and some aspects of the internal data collection and analysis would be carried out primarily by part-time contract personnel hired for this purpose (possibly recruited from among former Agency employees). In-house direction of the study and most of the internal data collection, analysis, and reporting could be accomplished with present resources without additional cost. Estimated total cost of the additional resources needed over the five-year period of the study: \$50,000.